Britain’s Curry Chefs Face Culinary Battle at the ARTA 2026 National Chef of the Year Cook-Off Competition

Tuesday 8 September, 2026

Chefs representing 15 UK regions compete at Cambridge Regional College after more than 1,200 businesses were nominated nationwide

Cambridge, 7 September 2026 — Curry chefs representing **15 regions from across the UK** gathered at **Cambridge Regional College** for the Asian Restaurant & Takeaway Awards (ARTA) **2026 National Chef of the Year Cook-Off Competition**, showcasing technical skill, creativity, flavour and the ability to perform under pressure in a live professional kitchen.

Held **in partnership with** Cambridge Regional College, with ChefOnline **as Strategic Partner**, the competition forms a key part of the judging programme for the seventh annual ARTA.

The identity of the **ARTA 2026 National Chef of the Year** will remain under wraps until the winner is announced at the **ARTA Grand Finale and Gala Evening on Monday, 12 October 2026, at the London Hilton on Park Lane.**

More Than 1,200 Businesses Nominated Nationwide

This year, **more than 1,200 restaurants and takeaways were nominated nationwide**, with businesses considered against key measures including quality of food, quality of service, value for money and food hygiene standards, alongside customer feedback through **Google and Tripadvisor reviews.**

The process is designed to identify and celebrate restaurants, takeaways and culinary professionals demonstrating outstanding standards within the UK Asian hospitality sector.

15 Regions Represented

Chefs participating in the National Cook-Off represented businesses from 15 regions across the UK.

Region: West Midlands

Business: Tikka Town

Town/City: Birmingham

Region: South West

Business: Two Chefs Indian Restaurant

Town/City: Weston-super-Mare

Region: North East

Business: The Vine Indian Cuisine

Town/City: Mosborough, Sheffield

Region: North London

Business: Ruhit's Indian Cuisine

Town/City: London

Region: Wales

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Asian Restaurant & Takeaway Awards (ARTA) :: ChefOnline :: Oscars Of The Curry Industry :: UK Curry Awards :: British Curry Award :: Culinary Awards ::

Scan Me:

Business: Elaichi

Town/City: Carmarthen

Region: South Central

Business: Spice Merchants

Town/City: Southsea, Portsmouth

Region: Kent

Business: Spice Village Indian Restaurant

Town/City: New Ash Green, Longfield

Region: North West

Business: Junoon

Town/City: Helsby, Frodsham

Region: Scotland

Business: Gurkha Kitchen

Town/City: Ellon

Region: Surrey

Business: New Anarkali Indian Restaurant & Takeaway

Town/City: East Molesey

Region: Essex

Business: Kusturi Indian Restaurant

Town/City: Colchester

Region: Northern Ireland

Business: Bangla

Town/City: Bangor

Region: Hertfordshire

Business: Aroma Lounge

Town/City: Hatfield

Region: East Anglia

Business: Jomidar Mahal

Town/City: Littleport, Cambridge

Region: East Midlands

Business: Spices of Paradise

Town/City: Bedford

A Test of Skill, Creativity and Flavour

Competitors were presented with an extensive selection of fresh ingredients from which to create their dishes, including **king prawns, rack of lamb, chicken and sea bream**, together with an array of **seasonal vegetables, pulses, fresh herbs and spices.**

The broad choice allowed chefs to demonstrate their individual approach, testing their knowledge of ingredients, technical ability, creativity and adaptability.

Their performances were assessed across **hygiene, technique, use of ingredients, creativity, presentation, flavour, appearance, texture and aroma.**

Experienced Judging Panel

The competition was assessed by a panel bringing together experience from professional kitchens, culinary education and the restaurant industry:

* **Graham Taylor** — Assistant Head of Department & Commercial Lead for the College and ARTA Judge

* **Chad Rahman** — Executive Chef, member of the Craft Guild of Chefs and Chaîne des Rôtisseurs, and ARTA Judge

* **Lauren Gregg** — Level 1 & 3 Course Lead, Professional Chef Diploma, LIQA, Cambridge Regional College

* **Mujibur Rahman** — Restaurateur and former Councillor and Mayor of Corby

Next Generation Showcases Its Talent

Students from **Cambridge Regional College** also demonstrated their culinary skills by preparing and serving **lobster** for the participating chefs and guests.

Their involvement brought experienced industry professionals and emerging talent together, highlighting the importance of practical training and stronger links between education and industry in developing the chefs of the future.

“Only the Second Time I Have Seen Such a Diverse Range of Ingredients”

Chad Rahman, Executive Chef and ARTA Judge, who has been involved in numerous culinary competitions, praised the freedom and diversity offered to competitors.

He said:

“I have been involved with many culinary competitions over the years, and this is only the second time I have seen such a diverse range of ingredients made available for chefs to choose from.”

“That freedom allows you to see what a chef can really do — how they understand ingredients, combine flavours, adapt and use their creativity under pressure. The diversity of dishes and ideas from chefs representing different parts of the country was particularly impressive.”

Reflecting on ARTA’s development, he added:

“ARTA has grown organically year after year into an important national platform for recognising the people and talent behind this industry. Its commitment to championing chefs, encouraging culinary excellence and raising professional standards deserves real recognition.”

Raising Standards Across the Industry

Graham Taylor, Assistant Head of Department & Commercial Lead for the College and ARTA Judge, said:

“The standard demonstrated by the chefs was extremely encouraging. The competitors brought a diverse range of skills, passion and a real desire to showcase their abilities. This year, we have also seen a noticeable improvement in food safety, core culinary skills and the way chefs worked with greater dexterity and fluidity in the kitchen.”

“It was particularly encouraging to see chefs working alongside their restaurant managers to prepare and cook traditional dishes that are currently being served in their own establishments. A great chef needs more than the ability to produce a good dish — technique, discipline, organisation, consistency and a strong understanding of ingredients are all essential.”

“The National Cook-Off gives chefs an opportunity to demonstrate these qualities in a competitive environment while encouraging the continued development of professional standards across the industry.”

Celebrating the People Behind Britain’s Asian Hospitality Industry

Dr Mohammed Munim**, Founder and Chairman of ARTA**, said:

“Our chefs are at the heart of the UK Asian hospitality industry. Behind every great restaurant and takeaway are people whose skill, dedication and creativity deserve to be recognised, and the National Cook-Off gives that talent a national stage.”

“Asian restaurants and takeaways have made an extraordinary contribution to British food culture, entrepreneurship, employment and communities across the country. But our future success will depend on how effectively we develop skills, encourage professional standards and inspire the next generation to see hospitality as a rewarding career.”

Commenting on the partnership with **Cambridge Regional College**, he added:

“Bringing experienced chefs together with emerging culinary talent is exactly the kind of connection our industry needs. We are delighted to work in partnership with Cambridge Regional College and grateful to everyone who helped make this national competition possible.”

Seven Years of ARTA

Now marking its **seventh annual event**, **the Asian Restaurant & Takeaway Awards (ARTA)** has grown into a major national celebration of the UK’s Asian curry restaurant and takeaway industry.

Widely recognised as the **“Oscars of the Curry Industry”**, ARTA celebrates the restaurants, takeaways and people helping to shape one of the most established and distinctive parts of Britain’s food and hospitality landscape.

The awards give diners an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the venues they love while shining a spotlight on **exceptional food, culinary craftsmanship, innovation and outstanding customer service.**

The **ARTA 2026 National Chef of the Year** will be revealed alongside the other national and regional award winners at the Grand Finale and Gala Evening on **Monday, 12 October 2026, at the London Hilton on Park Lane.**

Partners and Supporters

The Cook-Off Competition was held in partnership with **Cambridge Regional College**, with ChefOnline **as Strategic Partner**.

ARTA is proudly sponsored and supported by **DNA Payments, Super Pollo, Cobra Beer, Work Permit Cloud, NRB Bank, Square Mile Insurance, Finology Finance Broker, Paytap and Madhu’s.**

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